

**ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
BNTD 530 NEW TESTAMENT INTRODUCTION**

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May 11, 18, 25;
June 1, and 8, 2006;
6-10 pm

COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to the content and background of the New Testament, including the critical issues involved in the discipline of New Testament Introduction.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of the term the student should be able to:

1. Apply the skills and knowledge gained through the course in a more effective manner in life and ministry;
2. Respond to issues of concern about introductory matters pertinent to the New Testament;
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the historical, cultural, and religious environment of the Mediterranean and Near Eastern world from the end of the monarchy in Judah to the end of the Apostolic Age, or roughly from 539 BCE to CE 135;
4. Be able to identify, describe, and better interpret the various literary genres found in the New Testament;
5. Be able to identify how various circumstances and characteristics led to the writing of the various New Testament books;
6. Appreciate the diversity of the New Testament canon and its implications for preaching and teaching;
7. Develop a greater appreciation for the significance of the New Testament and an increased desire for living out the principles gleaned from personal Bible study.

TEXTBOOKS

Required:

Bell, Albert A. Jr. *Exploring the New Testament World: An Illustrated Guide to the World of the Jesus and the First Christians*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998.
Brown, Raymond E. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. NY: Doubleday, 1997.
Elwell, Walter A., and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2005 rev. ed.
Any translation of the New Testament.

Recommended:

- Achtemeier, Paul, Joel Green, and M.M. Thompson. *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology*. Eerdmans, 2001.
- Aune, David E. *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987.
- Carson, D.A., Moo, D., and Morris, L. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.
- deSilva, David A. *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000.
- Elwell, Walter A. and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Readings From the First-Century World*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998.
- Evans, Craig. A. and Stanley E. Porter. *Dictionary of New Testament Background*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000.
- Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. Third Edition. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987.
- Grant, Robert M. *Paul in the Roman World: The Conflict at Corinth*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001.
- Green, Joel B. and Scot McKnight. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992.
- Hawthorne, Gerald F. and Ralph P. Martin. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993.
- Horsley, Richard A., ed. *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*. NY: Trinity, 2004.
- Martin, Ralph P. and Peter H. Davids. *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997.
- Reddish, Mitchell G., ed. *Apocalyptic Literature: A reader*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995.
- Stendahl, Krister. *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976.
- Stowers, Stanley K. *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986.

BASIC OUTLINE

The major topics for reading, lectures, and discussion are provided for each class day. While it may be too much to read everything listed for every session, these sources are given for the students' sake (to provide additional resource material). Read as much as possible, noting the amount of reading that is appropriate for class time. The text books must be read in any case. Textbooks will not be placed on reserve, others will.

May 11

Historical, Religious, and Cultural Survey of the Mediterranean world from Hellenistic times to the end of the first century after Jesus
Greco-Roman World
Judaism and its development of Institutions
Social and Cultural Survey
Religious Survey

READINGS:

Brown, chaps. 4-5.

Bell, *Exploring the New Testament World*.

Elwell, *Encountering the New Testament*, chaps. 2, 13.

May 18

The Literary Background of the World of the First Christians

 Greek and Roman Literature

 Jewish Writings (Hellenistic Jewish and Rabbinic)

 Sacred Texts (Targum and Septuagint)

New Testament as Literature

READINGS:

Brown, appendix II.

Book Reviews and class Reports Due: Choose a book from among the Recommended list, write a review on it (see guidelines below) and give a brief report on it. The length of the review depends on the length and nature of the book chosen but should not run more than 5-6 pages.

May 25

Methods for Interpreting the New Testament Literature

 Textual Criticism

 Source Criticism

 Form Criticism

 Redaction Criticism

 Literary Criticism

 Genre Criticism

READINGS:

Brown, chaps. 2, 3.

Elwell, *Encountering the New Testament*, chaps. 1, 10-12.

June 1

The Gospels and Acts

 Synoptic Problem

 Synoptic Gospels

 Acts

 John

READINGS:

Keener, Craig. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. 2 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003:1:3-363.

Brown, chp.6, chaps. 7-11, appendix I.

Aune, chaps. 1-4.

Elwell, chaps. 3-9; 14-16.

Paper due: (a formal 8-10 page paper on a book of this section, footnotes, etc.; follow closely Turabian 6th ed.; on the background of a NT book; more directions will be given during the 1st class).

June 15

Epistles

Pauline

General

Revelation

READINGS:

Donfried, Karl P., ed. *The Romans Debate*. Rev & expanded ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson. 1977, 1991.

Jewett, Robert. "Romans as an Ambassadorial Letter," *Interpretation* 36 (1982):9-20.

Stowers, Stanley K. *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*.

Brown, chaps. 15-37, 12.

Aune, chaps. 5-7.

Elwell, chaps. 17-21; 22-Epilogue.

Paper due: (a formal 8-10 page paper on a book of this section, footnotes, etc.; follow closely Turabian 6th ed.; on the background of a NT book; more directions will be given during class.

METHODOLOGY

In this course we will seek to meet our objectives through:

1. Classroom lectures.
2. Classroom discussion of issues related to assigned reading, lectures and class assignments.
3. Each student will review a book listed under the Recommended list above and write a review (**Choose a book from among the Recommended, write a review on it (see guidelines below) and give a brief report on it. The length of the review depends on the length and nature of the book chosen but should not run more than 5-6 pages**) and present it in a brief report to the class on May 18. The review is due at the same time.
3. Two papers, each the length of 8-10 pages on topics noted above.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance at all class sessions is expected.
2. Complete reading of the course textbooks.
3. A book review of one of the books listed under Recommended. The length of the review depends on the length and nature of the book chosen but should not run more than 5-6 pages
4. Class Report on the book review.
5. Two papers, one on a book selected from the Gospels and Acts, one on a book from the Epistles or Revelation.

Note: *Late work may be penalized according to the discretion of the instructor.*

GRADING PROCEDURE

AGTS Grading Scale:

100-94:A	93-90: A-	
89-87: B+	86-84: B	83-80: B-
79-77: C+	76-74: C	73-70: C-
69-67: D+	66-64: D	63-60: D-
59--- : F		

1. Grade Weights:

Book Review and Report	50 points
1 st paper	100 points
2 nd paper	100 points

2. The total number of possible points to be earned in the semester is 250. Point totals are then changed into a percentage and assigned a letter grade according to the scale above (number of points earned divided by the possible).

Guidelines for writing a book review:

The Critical Review

- In today's world, so many books are written and published that one cannot hope to read everything, even in a specific field. In order to have an idea of what others are saying, I can read book reviews. They give the thrust of the work, an evaluation of its contents, and an assessment of its importance.
- In short, critical book reviews force students to read carefully and write thoughtfully.

What is a critical Review?

- A critical review is not a destructive criticism of the author and his or her ideas, but a careful analysis of the work. A critical review attempts to answer at least seven different questions:
 1. What is the basic thrust of the author's work?
 2. Why does the author say what he or she says?
 3. To whom is the writing directed and for what purpose?
 4. For whom or what (or against whom or what) does the author stand?
 5. How well has the author met his or her own objectives?
 6. How does this work compare with other writings?
 7. What is the reviewer's opinion of the work?

How to write a critical review?

- Preparing a 5-6 page book review entails reading, taking notes, evaluating what has been read, and writing out a summary, assessment, and comments of the book or article.
- A book review should contain four main components:
 1. A complete bibliographical entry as the title of the review. For example
Wright, N. T. What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity? Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997. 192 pp._
 2. Relevant information regarding the author, his or her academic training, position, and other books authored. Information on the author may be obtained from the book itself, from biographical files many libraries keep, and from other sources.
 3. A summary should synthesize the thrust of the book and its main arguments. Take care not to distort the emphasis given by the author. The length of the summary will depend, not only on the length of the material, but on the complexity of its contents. Try to keep the summary to three or four paragraphs.
 4. An evaluation of the book should be made first of all on the basis of the author's own objectives, as stated in the introduction. This mandates a careful reading of the introduction or preface For example, if an author states that the book deals with New Testament Christology, she will not be expected to deal with the topic in the sub-apostolic era. A critique must document the author's statements, giving the page where the item was found. Sometimes a review quotes paragraphs that show the author's position. Be sure to keep in mind the author's content in order not to distort the

ideas. Although one may disagree with the author and with the position he or she espouses, the language of a book or article review must be courteous. A well-documented analysis will be more convincing than a heated, emotional tirade. The language of a review written for a class assignment should be similar to that of research—cool, calm, and collected. Think of meeting the author of the book at a professional meeting and having him say in dismay, “So are you the reviewer who hit me so hard?”

Questions to guide evaluation:

1. Is the subject vital? If so, to whom? What difference will it make ten years from now?
 2. Is the subject too broad or too narrow for the author? Is it too shallow, too restricted?
 3. Is the author straightforward? Does he announce his bias? His limitations? His intentions?
 4. In the introduction, are the purpose of the study and the statement of the problem clear?
 5. Is the presentation clear and logical? Is the sequence natural? Are there missing points? Are the sections clear and self-contained?
 6. Is the research reliable? Does anything indicate you cannot fully trust this paper? Do you feel the author really looked everywhere she possibly could and reported accurately and without bias?
 7. What does the use of footnotes show? Are there too many notes? Too few? Are they from old sources? All from similar sources? Or from the same sources? Is the form clear and consistently used?
 8. Does the bibliography tell you something additional about the paper? Can you tell whether the author is using primary sources? General sources? Or authorities in the field?
 9. Is the language clear, concise, or wordy and unnecessarily difficult? Does the choice of words show carelessness? Conceit?
 10. Does the paper show a sincere desire to search out truth or is it a defense of a position?
- Usually the last item in an evaluation includes assessment of what group(s) will profit from reading this book. You may also want to suggest how useful the book will be for this certain group.

Much of this material is taken from: Nancy Jean Vyhmeister, Quality Research Papers (Zondervan, 2001).

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Barrett, C. K. *New Testament Background: Selected Documents*. NY: Harper and Row, 1956.
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- Bruce, F. F. *New Testament History*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1972.
- Cadbury, H. J. *The Making of Luke-Acts*. 2nd ed. London: SPCK, 1958, 1968.
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- Cartlidge, David R., and Dungan, David L. *Documents for the Study of the Gospels*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.
- Cohen, Shaye J. D. *From the Macabees to the Mishnah*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987.
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- Davies, W. D. *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*. Cambridge: University Press, 1963
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- Gerhardsson, Birger. *The Origins of the Gospel Tradition*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.
- Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Introduction*. 4th ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1970, 1990.
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- Paoli, E. A. *Rome, Its People Life and Customs*. London: Longman, 1963.
- Sanders, E. P. *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.
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SPECIFIC DATA

Prepared by Benny C. Aker, Ph. D., February 24, 2006